

## Unit Verse

"This is my commandment,  
that you love one another  
as I have loved you."  
JOHN 15:12

## JESUS LOVED ZACCHAEUS



## LEADER BIBLE STUDY

## CONTEXT AND COMMENTARY FOR PERSONAL STUDY AND PREPARATION

*(For age-appropriate language, use the Bible story on the following pages.)*

## LIFE POINT

We can follow Jesus' example to love others.

## LEVEL OF BIBLICAL LEARNING

God helps me love others, both friends and enemies.

## SCRIPTURE REFERENCE

Luke 19:1-10

## WEEKLY VERSE

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."  
'John 15:12

If someone had to describe you, what identifiers would they use? Would they use your occupation or your financial status? Would they describe your physical attributes? Would they talk about your character?

Luke identifies Zacchaeus with three specific descriptions: tax collector, rich, and short. Being known as a rich tax collector most likely created significant friction in Zacchaeus' life. In those days, Jewish people did not trust tax collectors because they would treat the Jewish people unfairly and take more money than they were supposed to. Since Zacchaeus was known as a rich man, he would most likely have become wealthy by taking money from the Jewish people. It's fair to say that Zacchaeus was unpopular.

Knowing this, consider Jesus' interaction with Zacchaeus. Jesus saw Zacchaeus in a tree, called him by name, and requested to stay at his house. Jesus recognized that Zacchaeus wanted to know Him. Being fully God and fully man, Jesus surely knew that Zacchaeus was a tax collector. But Jesus also knew that Zacchaeus needed a Savior. Zacchaeus quickly came down from the tree, repented, and promised to repay, four times over, any money he had extorted.

Why would Jesus choose to stay in the home of a "sinful man?" Because Jesus came to seek and save the lost. He looked beyond the descriptors that defined Zacchaeus and offered him a chance for a new identity. What is your response to the lost world around you? Be honest. Do you ever respond the way the crowd did to Jesus' interaction with Zacchaeus? What would it look like if we followed Jesus' example to love others? Every day we have the opportunity to point those around us to a loving Father who sees beyond their failures and offers a chance for redemption. As you pray this week, ask the Lord to open your eyes to see the lost and hurting people around you. Ask Him to give you a heart for those who need to hear the truth of the gospel and the boldness to share the good news.



# TELL THE STORY

## INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

- Give an index card or sticky note to each child. Instruct kids to write their names on the card.
- Provide painter's tape for kids to make a loop so both sides are sticky. Direct kids to place the tape loop on the back of their notes.
- Allow each child a turn to jump and stick her note to the wall as high as she can. Announce the child who sticks his note the highest is the winner.
- Say: "We are going to learn how Jesus loved a man named Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was very short." Explain that when Jesus traveled through Zacchaeus' town, Zacchaeus was not tall enough to see over the crowd. Encourage kids to listen to the Bible story to discover what Zacchaeus did to see over the heads of other people, and how Jesus responded to him.
- At the end of the class time, retrieve the sticky notes from the wall. Distribute so each child receives someone else's name. Give kids time to write something kind to the name of the note and then return to the person.

## GETTING TO THE POINT

- Invite preteens to name people in their lives who are easy to love. Ask: "Why is it so easy to love them?"
- Acknowledge that it is easier to love someone who is kind and fun more than loving someone who speaks unkindly to you or treats you poorly.
- Remind preteens:
  - "Jesus loved someone others despised.
  - Jesus showed us how to love all people, even those who are hard to love.
  - We can follow Jesus' example to love others."

## LOOK IN THE BOOK

- **Remark** that tax collectors were often unpopular and hard to love.
- **Invite** preteens to open their Bibles to Luke 19.
- **Explain** that today's passage of Scripture is about a man named Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector, who encountered Jesus.
- **Acknowledge** that some preteens may have heard this Bible story multiple times and may even be singing the well-known song in their heads, but are struggling to show love to some people.
- **Read** Luke 19:1-10 aloud inviting preteens to each take a turn reading several verses at a time.
- **Ask** kids to explain what is happening as each scripture is read.
- **Act out the story.** Ask volunteers to be Zaccheus, Jesus, a person in the crowd, and an influencer. Explain that our "influencer" has a thousands of followers on their You Tube Channel and is trying to convince people to love all people. Invite the influencer to welcome everyone to the channel and explain that he/she will prove it is possible to love everyone. Kids act out the story pretending they are on You Tube. Ask the kids watching, if they are willing to love all people to give a like (thumbs up) and subscribe by sharing one way they will show love to someone that's hard to love this week.



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### TELL THE STORY

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#### REVIEW QUESTIONS

- What did Zacchaeus do so he could see Jesus walk by? (he climbed a sycamore tree)
- What did Zacchaeus decide to do after he met Jesus? (give half of what he owned to the poor and repay engine he had cheated four times what he took)
- Why do you think Zacchaeus said he would repay four times what he had taken wrongfully? (Jesus changed Zacchaeus' life. He wanted his actions to show that Jesus had truly changed his life.)
- Who did Jesus come to look for and rescue? (people who sin, people like you and me)
- What message can we learn from Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus? (We can follow Jesus' example to love others.)
- How can you show the love of Jesus to others? (answers will vary)



## BIBLE LEARNING ACTIVITIES

### 1. BALLOON BLOWER BALL GRAB

Turn on a balloon blower. Place a ball pit ball on each stream of air. Students grab the floating ball with tongs, make it even harder by providing a blindfold. Talk about how it's hard to grab something, even when you're looking for it. Zacchaeus was looking for Jesus, and Jesus was looking for him. Jesus saw Zacchaeus in a way different than everyone else. Ask kids "Who needs you to see them in a different way than everyone else sees them? How can you give them attention in a way that Jesus would?"

### 2. PAINT WITH BROCCOLI

Use broccoli to paint a tree! Use a regular paintbrush to create a trunk. Then, dip heads of broccoli into paint and dab it onto the limbs to make leaves. As students paint, ask "Why did Zacchaeus climb the tree? What did he want to see? Is Jesus worth seeing? What would you be willing to do to see Jesus?"

### 3. TREASURE HUNT

Hide Jesus figures, fake coins, and candy in a sand tub. Provide students with tongs. Set this station up for free play, or as a team game where a leader times teams to see how quickly they can find the items. Share how Zacchaeus had a lot of treasure, but was willing to give it away when he saw Jesus as his most precious treasure. Ask "Out of the items you collected, which has the most value to you and why? What are you willing to give to Jesus?"

### 4. CHURCH INVITATIONS

Using paper, markers, and stickers, invite kids to write handwritten notes inviting a friend to come to church with them. Encourage preteens give it to their friend when they see them next! Talk about how Jesus saw Zacchaeus and invited him to dinner.

### 5. EDIBLE CRAFT

Using pretzel sticks, Sour Patch Kids, Teddy Grahams, and marshmallows, invite students to create Zacchaeus in the tree. Marshmallow help the pretzel stick tree stand. The Sour Patch Kid and Teddy Graham represents Zacchaeus and Jesus. As kids create the story, talk about friends they can bring to church or tell about Jesus. Discuss ways they can show love to them.